

Marylin Rueschemeyer and Christiane Lemke. eds. The Quality of Life in the German Democratic Republic: Changes and Development in a State Socialist Society.

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Neither the editors nor the ten contributors of this volume could have imagined that changes in Eastern Europe would occur with such speed that they would defy our previous understanding of social transformation in such societies. Taken by surprise, the contributors to this volume examine social contradictions in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) before the November 1989 revolution. By focusing on state, society, policy, planning, women, personhood, cities, environment and the church, the authors portray a rare picture of a societal part of Europe about which the English audience of social scientists has been uninformed.

While the articles explore multidimensional issues supported by qualitative and quantitative data, one major theme throughout suggests that the authoritative and centralized policy implementations of the political society led to intended and unintended contradictory results inimical to humanistic and socialist-oriented principles. Although the similarity to Western processes is not pointed out, the GDR was also confronted with bureaucratic inefficiency, crises of mismanagement, reproduction rather than transformation of unequal gender relations, value transmissions of sex-role differentiations, non-socialist personhood developments, Fordism and alienation and last but not least, the alarming devastation of urban and environmental junctures. Scharfs opening article describes how functional, pragmatic and economic-guided planning interests worked against a humanistically oriented social development.

Of main interest for women's studies are Dölling's, Nickel's, and Lemke's analyses on how legal equality translates into a contradictory everyday praxis for women regarding work, gender, sex roles and personality development. The information presented is relevant to comparative anthropological studies on women, work and social change. The new struggle of

east German women now will be related, not to the idealization of the kleinbürgerliche Familienleben of the GDR, but to the idealization of this family form within the bourgeois law of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). This should be researched further.

Examining recruitment and education, Glaessner's startling results are similar to processes reported from Hungary. Although his analysis is critical and informative, the essay could have gained in theoretical and analytical comparative weight if he had also drawn on literature published in 1979 by Ivan Szelenyi and George Konrad.

In clashing opposition to socialist work ethics regarding a workplace free of alienation, Dennis' article affirms that shiftworking women in the GDR suffered from insufficient facilities and poor workplace conditions. In a similar manner, the urban and environmental degradation is far from successful development in the GDR; rather, the urban and environmental question examined by Rueschemeyer and DeBardeleben only mildly anticipates what daily postrevolutionary news affirms, namely, that damages are of such magnitudes that their future effects are incomprehensible.

In the final part on culture and leisure time, Hanke juxtaposes Marx's view on society and time, and Brisky's and Gransow's related essays implicitly support Hanke's critique that, according to leisure time reality in the GDR, the "socialist" society was neither rich nor progressive in achieving more leisure and free time because, as Hanke writes, "necessities still dominate action." Goeckel's merely implicit allusion to grass-root resistance and the Protestant church's struggle for existence within different periods of the political society, and its trying bargaining for social space for mediating culture without a civic society, leads us to the theoretical shortcomings of the volume.

The essays are readable, superbly translated (five of the essays were translated by Michel Vale), and usefully organized with related themes. The volume opens an interdisciplinary perspective that has been characteristically neglected on eastern Germany. Historians, political scientists, sociologists and scholars of aesthetics, communication and arts have participated in transmitting to us multicolored cultural processes of life in the GDR. It is regrettable that the anthropological perspective is nowhere to be found. On the other hand, the Quality of Life in the German Democratic Republic suffers from scant methodological and theoretical shortcomings. More concretely, while the editors' stated aim includes a transmission of "grass-root perspectives," the voices of the people are surprisingly out of sight. Here, participant observation

(i.e., studying up as well as studying down) would have captured more detailed portrayals of the different facets of culture (i.e., the voices of those with power as well as voices of those who are less privileged and less powerful).

While the authors are successful in informing us of social problems, the analyses lack dynamic and theoretical richness. Literature of scholars who have grappled with related problematics, remain unexplored. One wonders why the church was unable to mediate more successfully for space to create a potentiality for the rise of a dialectic of culture. Or why the church and not other institutions? Why did social movements develop in late capitalist societies but not in the GDR, where similar policy mismanagement occurred.? For a widened understanding, works of Habermas, Offe, Touraine, Weber and Gramsci are pertinent. The only exception is Volker Gransow's essay. His concept of "complexity of hegemony" is promising for explaining power, conflict, culture and discontent, but he also neglects the question of resistance. To fully conceptualize social change in Europe and particularly in Germany, we need more theoretically oriented and empirically grounded systematic research. In this vein, *The Quality of Life in the German Democratic Republic* remains a valuable background source and initiates further study of the emerging contradictions of "the unification process of Germany" and its relationship to European and international scenarios.